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PROPOSED LEGISLATION AGAINST THE TEACHING OF EVOLUTION

IN KENTUCKY¹

"The Kentucky House of Representatives spent five hours today (March 9) in discussing and hearing discussions on the 'monkey bill' of Representative G. W. Ellis of Barren County, forbidding the teaching of evolution in public schools and universities. The measure was defeated by a vote of 42 to 41, after a recapitulation of the vote during which members were dragged into the chamber from other parts of the capital.

"Dr. F. L. McVey, president of the state university, and the Rev. Dr. E. L. Powell, pastor of the First Christian Church, Louisville, discussed the bill by invitation. The former declared that the legislature is not within its rights in passing such a law as that proposed, and urged the members not to base the inspiration of the Bible on matters not essential, but to heed teachings of the Book. He asserted that the Bible is not an authority on science, legislation, chemistry, or any of one thousand other subjects, but on moral, spiritual and religious matters. Dr. McVey went into the subject of evolution, pointing out that many accept the teachings as not in contradiction to the Bible, and insisted that the university makes no attempt to interfere with the religion of its students. He told of the various religious activities of the university, and warned the House that it would set a dangerous precedent in the passage of the Ellis bill. He recalled fights on scientific theories in the past based on the ground that they are opposing the Bible, and reviewed briefly the manner in which various scientific subjects are taught.

"Mr. Noel W. Gaines of Frankfort, formerly an army officer, . . . put William Jennings Bryan to shame in his denunciation of those who believe evolution, directing many of his remarks directly at Dr. Powell and Mr. McVey. . . . One of his 'stunts' was a division of the sheep and goats, placing Dr. McVey, Dr. Powell and various zoology textbooks on the one side and the Bible, the Declaration of Independence and himself on the other. He had the books before him as he ran up and down behind the clerk's desk, scattering them

¹ Abridged from the *Louisville Courier-Journal*.

about as he waved his arms in emphatic gestures. Finally he threw one of the textbooks to the floor and trampled it under foot.

"‘I am ashamed of this day in the Kentucky legislature,’ said Representative G. C. Waggoner of Scott County, a minister and veteran legislator, toward the close of the debate.

"‘This bill smacks of intolerance and the shadows of the Dark Ages are settling about us.’ Mr. Waggoner opposed the bill on the ground that in passing it the legislature would exceed its functions as a law-making body and would set a dangerous precedent. ‘There have been times here today when those on both sides of this discussion were about ready to place their opponents on the rack and torture them,’ continued Mr. Waggoner. ‘I don’t know anything about evolution and from what I’ve heard I don’t believe there are others here who do. We have set up a straw man and have been boxing industriously at him all day.’ . . .

"When the roll was called the vote stood 38 to 36 for the bill, which meant its defeat, as 40 votes are required for passage. As Mr. Meyers was about to announce this the proponents demanded that the absentees be called. Then the vote was 40 to 39 for the bill. The opponents demanded a recapitulation. During that they dragged in two more members and the proponents one, making it 41 to 41. Representative Bryce Cundiff, who had declined to vote on the ground that he ‘was a hard shell Baptist and believes what was would be anyhow,’ said he would have to discard his religion and vote ‘No.’ Then the bill was declared to be defeated by a vote of 41 to 40.

IN SOUTH CAROLINA¹

"The teaching of ‘the cult known as Darwinsim’ as ‘a creed to be followed’ is prohibited in all state supported public schools and institutions of higher learning by a proviso attached as a rider to the general appropriation bill by the Senate yesterday morning. The amendment, which was tagged on to the end of the section providing for the appropriation of funds for the public school system, would make it impossible for any public school or higher institution of learning teaching or permitting ‘Darwinism’ to be taught to receive any funds from the state and would prohibit the paying of state funds to

¹ From the *Columbia State*. The amendment was eliminated from the bill by the conference committee appointed to adjust differences between the bill as passed by the House and by the Senate. It is said that another attempt will probably be made to pass the bill when the legislature meets next year.

any such institution. Senator F. A. Miller of Hartsville is the author of the proviso, which was adopted by the Senate, practically without opposition.

"Ultimate fate of the proviso, which took its place as one of the Senate amendments to which the House refused concurrence, will therefore have to be determined by the conference committee to which the appropriation bill was referred. None of the representatives on this committee from either house have announced their stand on the question and since the House has never explicitly expressed itself on the question the House conferees will consider the proviso without any idea as to the House's stand on the matter.

"The amendment was passed in the Senate practically without debate or opposition, Senator Miller making the only address either for or against the measure. The proviso follows in full:

And provided, further, That no moneys appropriated for public education or for the maintenance and support of state supported institutions shall be used or paid to any such school or institution teaching, or permitting to be taught as a creed to be followed, the cult known as 'Darwinism.'

"The proviso contains no definition of 'Darwinism' and is intended, Senator Miller explains, to apply only to Darwinism and therefore not to the theories of evolution of Lamarck, Bergson, Le Dantec, Baldwin, Osborn, and the many others who have since Darwin's day practically thrown 'Darwinism,' as it was first enunciated, into the discard. The amendment applies, Senator Miller points out, only when 'Darwinism'—which is now defined as the theory of natural selection, that is, the survival of the fittest in the struggle for life, was the mechanism by which evolution was accomplished—is taught or permitted to be taught 'as a creed to be followed' and not when it is merely explained to the pupils as the pagan philosophies are explained."—*Science*.

THE PROPOSED SUPPRESSION OF THE TEACHING OF EVOLUTION¹

"The mode of origin of species was practically discovered by a little-known German paleontologist by the name of Waagen in 1869, but, like the great discovery of Mendel in heredity, this truth has been long in making its way, even among biologists. Waagen's observations that species do not originate by chance or by accident, as Darwin at one time supposed, but through a continuous and well-

¹ Extracts from articles in the *New York Times* for March 5.

ordered process, has since been confirmed by an overwhelming volume of testimony, so that we are now able to assemble and place in order line after line of animals in their true evolutionary succession, extending, in the case of what I have called the *édition de luxe* of the horses, over millions of years. We speak to the earth from Eocene times onward to the closing age of man, and it always teaches us exactly the same story. These facts are so well known and make up such an army of evidence, that they form the chief foundation of the statement that evolution has long since passed out of the domain of hypothesis and theory, to which Mr. Bryan refers, into the domain of natural law.

"Evolution takes its place with the gravitation law of Newton. It should be taught in our schools simply as Nature speaks to us about it, and entirely separated from the opinions, materialistic or theistic, which have clustered about it. This simple, direct teaching of Nature is full of moral and spiritual force, if we keep the element of human opinion out of it. The moral principle inherent in evolution is that nothing can be gained in this world without an effort; the ethical principle inherent in evolution is that the best only has the right to survive; the spiritual principle in evolution is the evidence of beauty, of order, and of design in the daily myriad of miracles to which we owe our existence. This is my answer to Mr. Bryan's very natural solicitude about the influence of evolution in our schools and colleges—a solicitude not inherent in the subject itself, but in the foolishness and conceit of certain of the teachers who are privileged to teach of the processes of life.

"It would not be true to say that the evolution of man rests upon evidence as complete as that of the horse, for example, because we have only traced man's ancestors back for a period of 400,000 years, as geologic time was conservatively estimated in 1893 by Secretary Walcott of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington; whereas, we have traced the horse back for a period of 3,000,000 years, according to similar estimates of geologic time.

"The very recent discovery of Tertiary man, which I have just described in *Natural History* (November–December, 1921), living long before the Ice Age, certainly capable of walking in an erect position, having a hand and a foot fashioned like our own, also a brain of sufficient intelligence to fashion many different kinds of implements, to make a fire, to make flint tools which may have been

used for the dressing of hides as clothing, constitutes the most convincing answer to Mr. Bryan's call for more evidence. It once more reminds us of the ignorance of man of the processes of Nature, and sets a new boundary beyond which digging in the earth for more of truth must be directed. This Foxhall man, found near Ipswich, England, thus far known only by the flint implements he made and his fire, is the last bit of evidence in the direction of giving man a descent line of his own far back in geologic time. It tends to remove man still further from the great lines which led to the man apes, the chimpanzee, the orang, the gorilla and the gibbon. This is not guess work, this is a fact. It is another truth which we shall have to accept regardless of its effect. No naturalist has ever ventured to place man so far back in geologic time as this actual discovery of the Foxhall man places him. In this instance again truth is stranger than hypothesis or speculation.

"Nearer to us is the Piltdown man, found not far from 75 miles to the southwest of Ipswich, England; still nearer in geologic time is the Heidelberg man, found on the Neckar River; still nearer is the Neanderthal man, whom we now know all about—his frame, his head form, his industries, his ceremonial burial of the dead, also evidence of his belief in a future existence; nearer still is the Cro-Magnon man, who lived about 30,000 years ago, our equal if not our superior in intelligence. This chain of human ancestors was totally unknown to Darwin. He could not have even dreamed of such a flood of proof and truth. It is a dramatic circumstance that Darwin had within his reach the head of the Neanderthal man without realizing that it constituted the 'missing link' between man and the lower order of creation. All this evidence is today within reach of every schoolboy. It is at the service of Mr. Bryan. It will, we are convinced, satisfactorily answer in the negative his question: 'Is it not more rational to believe in the creation of man by separate act of God than to believe in evolution without a particle of evidence?'"

HENRY FAIRFIELD OSBORN.

"Is it any more degrading to hold that man was made through a long line of animal ancestry than to believe that he was made directly from the dust? Surely the horse and the dog and the monkey belong to higher orders of existence than do the clod and the stone. Whether we accept the teachings of evolution or the most literal interpretation of the Biblical account we are compelled

to recognize the fact that our bodily origin has been a humble one; as Sir Charles Leyell once said, 'It is mud or monkey.' But this lowly origin does not destroy the dignity of man; his real dignity consists not in his origin but in what he is and in what he may become.

"If only the theological opponents of evolution could learn anything from past attempts to confute science by the Bible they would be more cautious. It was once believed universally that the earth was flat and that it was roofed over by a solid 'firmament,' and when scientific evidence was adduced to show that the earth was a sphere and that the 'firmament' was not a solid roof, it was denounced as opposed to the Scriptures. Those who have visited the Columbian Library in the Cathedral of Seville will recall the Bible of Columbus with marginal notes in his own handwriting to prove that the sphericity of the earth was not opposed to the Scriptures, and a treatise written by him while in prison to pacify the Inquisition. Today only Voliva and his followers at Zion City maintain that the earth is flat, and the heavens a solid dome, because this is apparently taught by the Scriptures.

"The central position of the earth in the universe with all heavenly bodies revolving around it was held to be as certain as holy writ. All the world knows the story of 'Starry Galileo and His Woes' at the hands of the Inquisition, but the Copernican theory was opposed not only by the Roman Catholic Church, but also by the leaders of the Reformation. Martin Luther denounced it as 'the work of a fool;' Melanchthon declared that it was neither honest nor decent to teach this pernicious doctrine, and that it should be repressed by severe measures, and John Wesley declared that it 'tended toward infidelity.' Even as late as 1724 the Newtonian theory of gravity was assailed by eminent authorities as 'atheistic,' since 'it drove God out of His universe and put a law in His place.'

"The conflict between geology and Genesis as to the days of creation and the age of the earth lasted until the middle of the last century, and students of Dana's geology will recall the reconciliation between the two which that great man devoutly undertook. But, by the ultra-orthodox, he and other Christian geologists were denounced as infidels and as impugnors of the sacred record. It took three hundred years to end this conflict, if it may be said to be wholly ended now, but certainly no intelligent person now believes

that the earth was made just 5,926 years ago and in six literal days.

"And now comes Mr. Bryan in this twentieth century of enlightenment preaching a new *auto da fé*, attempting to establish an inquisition for the trial of science at the bar of theology! He proposes to prohibit the teaching of evolution by fine and imprisonment, to repeal a law of nature by a law of Kentucky. He proposes to gather into the fold of his narrow theology all existing public and private schools, colleges and universities, and to allow evolutionists and agnostics to found their own schools. In view of the fact that, with the exception of a few sectarian institutions, all our colleges and universities are dedicated to 'the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men,' that for a generation at least they have turned away from the teaching of dogmatic theology to the cultivation of science, literature and art, that they have during this period received great benefactions for the expressed or implied purpose of carrying on this work in the spirit of freedom to seek, to find and to teach the truth as God gives men to see the truth—in view of these considerations it may well be asked whether it would not be more fitting for Mr. Bryan to establish his own institution for teaching his own views of science and theology, as Dowie, for example, did at Zion City, rather than to attempt to convert existing institutions to that purpose.

"Scientific investigators and productive scholars in almost every field have long since accepted evolution in the broadest sense as an established fact. Science now deals with the evolution of the elements, of the stars and solar system, of the earth, of life upon the earth, of various types and species of plants and animals, of the body, mind and society of man, of science, art, government, education and religion. In the light of this great generalization all sciences, and especially those which have to do with living things, have made more progress in the last half century than in all the previous centuries of human history. Even progressive theology has come to regard evolution as an ally rather than as an enemy.

"In the face of all these facts, Mr. Bryan and his kind hurl their medieval theology. It would be amusing if it were not so pathetic and disheartening to see these modern defenders of the faith beating their gongs and firing their giant crackers against the ramparts of science."

EDWIN GRANT CONKLIN.